

Upstate Forever

Preserving Sensible Growth and
Protecting Special Places in the Upstate

#E1-1617 07W

July 26, 2005

BY FEDERAL EXPRESS

Mr. Vernon Williams
Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, NW
Room 711
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

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**SURFACE
TRANSPORTATION BOARD**



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TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

RE: STB Doc. # AB-490 (Sub-No. 1X)
Greenville County, South Carolina

Dear Mr. Williams:

Upstate Forever respectfully submits this request for public use condition and trail use/rail banking under 15 C.F.R. Sections 1152.28 and 1152.29 for the railroad described in the above-referenced docket. The subject property, generally known as the Greenville & Northern Railroad ("GNR"), extends from railroad milepost 0.0 in Greenville, South Carolina to railroad milepost 11.8 near Travelers Rest, South Carolina—a distance of approximately 11.8 miles.

Upstate Forever is a non-profit, tax exempt organization chartered to "protect special places and promote sensible growth" in the Upstate region of South Carolina. Founded in 1998, we now have a staff of 15, two offices, and over 1,600 members who support our work.

One of our very first projects was advocacy for public acquisition of the GNR. We were delighted when Greenville County Council approved funds to acquire the property, which is now owned by the Greenville County Economic Development Corporation (GCEDC).

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Public Use Condition

We respectfully request that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) find that the GNR is suitable for other public use, specifically interim trail use, and to place the following conditions on the abandonment:

1. *Find that the owner shall not dispose of the corridor, other than the tracks, ties and signal equipment.*

The GNR is of incalculable value to the public. For most of its length, the GNR follows the Reedy River. After many decades of abuse and neglect, this river is undergoing a spectacular restoration. The City of Greenville recently completed a stunning expansion of "Falls Park," which involved the removal of a four lane highway bridge and replacing it with a single suspension pedestrian bridge that overlooks Reedy River Falls, where Greenville was founded in 1770. Immediately upstream is "Riverplace," now under construction and the largest private development project in Greenville's history. Across from Riverplace is the Peace Center for the Performing Arts. Adjoining Riverplace is "Linky Stone Park, a small one acre public park where the GNR begins.

There is now overwhelming public support for interim use of the GNR as a trail directly connecting these wonderful projects in the downtown Greenville area to communities and public parks upstream and then on to Furman University, a major institution of higher learning (the GNR goes directly through the Furman campus) and the City of Travelers Rest, where the GNR ends. Such use has been recommended in numerous studies and plans—most recently, "The Reedy River Master Plan" and the "Vision 2025" plan, and is strongly supported by both Furman and Travelers Rest.

2. *Find that the owner shall not remove or destroy potential trail-related structures such as bridges, trestles, culverts that have considerable value for recreational trail purposes.*

The bridges, trestles and culverts are not in a suitable condition for rail use but can be converted to interim trail use with

minimal expense and effort. Accordingly, these facilities should be preserved.

Interim Trail Use

The GNR is suitable for rail banking. Therefore, Upstate Forever makes the following statement of willingness to assume financial responsibility:

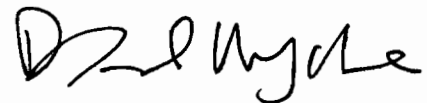
In order to establish interim trail use and rail banking under Section 8(d) of the National Trails System Act, 16 U.S.C. Section 1247(d), and 49 C.F.R. Section 1152.29, Upstate Forever is willing to assume full responsibility for the management of, and indemnify Greenville County and the GCEDC against potential liability for, interim trail use of the GNR.

Upstate Forever acknowledges that use of the right-of-way is subject to Greenville County continuing to meet its responsibilities described above and to possible future reconstruction and reactivation of the GNR for rail service.

Enclosed is the required \$200 filing fee.

We appreciate the STB's consideration of this request. Please let us know if you have any questions or need any additional information. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Wyche".

Brad Wyche
Executive Director

cc: Mr. William Mullins
Baker & Miller PLLC
2401 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Number 300
Washington, D.C. 20037